DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 650 CS 505 135

AUTHOR Friedrich, Gustav W.
TITLE Renewing the Commitment to Scholarship.
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (71st, Denver, CO, November 7-10, 1985).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; Communication Research; *Department Heads; Departments; Educational Cooperation; Educational Improvement; Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Professional Development; *Scholarship; *Speech Communication; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Improvement

ABSTRACT

The speech communication department chair's most important function involves creating a healthy departmental climate for professional growth and development. While the department chair must be able to recognize and accept the fact that some faculty members cannot or will not improve their performance, there are still four principles he or she can observe in an effort to renew faculty commitment to scholarship. First, set realistic expectations of scholarship, or rather, define scholarship broadly enough so that all contributions to knowledge--including those that describe educational strategies and techniques--are encouraged. Second, make the initiative a departmental one. The goals of an effort to renew commitment to scholarship must be seen as set by the faculty members since their participation and acceptance are a necessary foundation for effective implementation. To this end, a departmental committee on research, appointed by the chair, can not only aid in setting and clarifying departmental goals, but also provide faculty leadership in locating and organizing resources for the achievement of those goals. Third, think big, but start where the chances for success are high. Initial efforts might focus on a small group of motivated volunteers, with changes kept to a minimum to avoid resistance. Fourth, provide options and be flexible. No single approach is suitable for all faculty members and the identification of a variety of approaches enables faculty members to choose the ones best suited to their style and needs. Approaches might include participation on a research team, exchanges and sabbaticals, and participation in local, regional, or national conferences. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED263650

RENEWING THE COMMITMENT TO SCHOLARSHIP

Gustav W. Friedrich
University of Oklahoma

After selecting good faculty members and securing support for them, I believe that a chair's most important function involves creating a healthy departmental climate for professional growth and development. Given current demographic trends (a declining growth in higher education and a resultant decreased mobility for faculty members), such efforts are likely to be increasingly difficult within the immediate future. It is thus with mixed feelings that I accepted Bob Dick's invitation to appear on this panel. Since I have never before had the opportunity to really think about and systematize my views on strategies for "Renewing the Commitment to Scholarship," I do not consider myself especially knowledgeable on this topic. Nevertheless, I welcome this opportunity to pull together, and receive feedback on, some ideas that have been floating around in my mind.

In presenting these views, I have chosen the form of elaborating four principles. Before presenting them, however, let me begin with a caveat: I do not believe complete success in this area is attainable. That is, I believe that a chair must be able to recognize and accept the fact that some faculty members cannot or will not--despite the best of intentions and a strong effort--improve their performance. Within that context, my first principle is . . .

CS 505 135

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gustav W. Friedrich

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

1. SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS. Most of us adopted a "research-university model" for ourselves when we did our graduate work and, at minimum, have paid homage to that ideal ever since. In that view, faculty members should devote their lives to the pursuit of knowledge. Our primary occupation is conducting research and publishing essays in our specialized field. The only thing wrong with this view is that it dooms the majority of us to feelings of failure and inadequacy. As Warren Bryan Martin, a senior program officer at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, suggests: within the American professoriate . . .

*2 to 5 per cent of faculty members provide creative leadership in research and scholarship.

*About 15 per cent of all professors conduct research and have their work published.

*25 per cent are capable of the "synoptic function," which, Martin says, means they can take both new and old knowledge and make "a creative synthesis." He says these professors conduct work "as important as the research of faculty members at research universities."

*30 to 35 per cent are "active followers."

*5 to 10 per cent are "time servers."

*Another 5 to 10 per cent are "chronically aggrieved." These professors "know the sky is falling because a piece of it has shattered their ideals and they have never recovered from it."

*And last, a few of us, according to Martin, are troublemakers or eccentrics. (The Chronicle of Higher Education, July 19, 1985, p. 23.)

In citing Mr. Martin, I do not mean to imply that we should purge our frustrations or feelings of inadequacy by abandoning our commitment to scholarship. I am arguing, however, that we need to define scholarship broadly enough so that more than a select few have the possibility of achieving success. We ought, I believe, to encourage all contributions to knowledge--including those that describe educational stategies and techniques. Unless we wish them to be pretentious and overblown, we must strive to state our goals and objectives realistically within a framework of departmental, institutional, and societal norms.

2. MAKE THE INITIATIVE A DEPARTMENTAL ONE. To ensure the likelihood of success for an effort at renewed commitment to scholarship, the goals to be achieved must be seen as set by faculty members themselves rather than by other persons in the academic hierarchy. Faculty participation and acceptance are a necessary foundation for effective implementation.

Departmental agreement on goals leads to the development of esprit de corps and a sense of mutual support and interdependence. No matter how appropriate the goals, they are not easily implemented without the support of the majority of the faculty. While a departmental chair can be influential in the process, that influence must be exercised within the context of a truly cooperative effort involving the total department. As any good sailor knows, one sails with the wind rather than trying to go against it.

Even assuming departmental agreement on the importance of a renewed commitment to scholarship, however, individual faculty members will participate in that effort only when they see that benefits will accrue to them--when they perceive the department's success as synonymous with their own. To ensure the greatest likelihood of acceptance, then, a proposed plan for renewal must not only be logical and well conceived, it must take into consideration the personal concerns of each faculty member. It must acknowledge the fact that a faculty member's first reaction to any proposed change is to ask how this change will affect her or him personally in terms of work assignment, salary increase, promotion, and professional development. It is important, therefore, to be sensitive to the values held by members of the department and to develop a plan for responding to the personal needs of those who will be most affected.

A useful approach for developing a departmentally-based initiative aimed

at renewal of commitment to scholarship is the formation of a departmental committee on research. This committee can aid not only in the setting and clarifying of departmental goals, but can provide faculty leadership in locating and organizing resources for the achievement of those goals. Such committees can, for example, sponsor seminars on writing grant proposals and colloquia in which faculty members report their research efforts.

It is in the appointing and charging of this committee that the department chair has the greatest opportunity for influence. She or he can identify and work with faculty leaders (those admired and respected by colleagues for intelligence, honesty, and integrity) in forming the research committee. Once members have been selected, the chair can then discuss her or his hopes for the research committee individually with the committee's most influential members before providing a charge to the committee as a whole. If these individuals are persuaded that the chair's ideas have merit, they will ensure support from the rest of the committee. Mobilizing departmental leaders to support desired changes is the most effective strategy available to a departmental chair.

3. THINK BIG, BUT START WHERE THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS ARE HIGH. Faculty members often perceive new initiatives as an infringement on their already crowded schedules. Thus, while departmental goals ought to be set high (each individual producing the best possible work), initial efforts ought to be focused where the possibility for failure is low.

First impressions are crucial, and a few small but highly successful efforts will pave the way for more ambitious projects and activities later.

Initial efforts, then, might focus on a small group of motivated volunteers. Even for this group, keeping change to a minimum will help insure a minimum of resistence. In addition, to avoid rejection, change can be proposed for a specific experimental period. If the experiment works, it is more likely to be accepted by the rest of the faculty. A low-profile, low-key approach keeps expectations at realistic levels and allows motivated volunteers to produce results that set examples for departmental colleagues.

In working at this level, the departmental chair can encourage new ideas, goals, and programs by providing small incentives such as secretarial assistance, student assistantships, released time, and access to research and travel support. In addition, the chair needs to be aware of the crucial importance of the power of recognition. Publicly rewarding performance via announcements in faculty meetings, news releases, departmental newsletters, and notices on bulletin boards not only continues but spreads rewarded activities. One of the chair's most important jobs is to identify good performance and to find the time and place to offer sincere compliments.

4. PROVIDE OPTIONS AND BE FLEXIBLE. In developing an initiative for the

renewal of commitment to scholarship, it is important to avoid concentrating on one approach. No single approach is suitable for all faculty members and the identification of a variety of approaches enables faculty members to choose one or more to best suit their style and needs. Among some of the possibilities for renewal are:

a. Participation on a research team (for a description of the structure and operation of such teams at Michigan State, see: Miller, G. R. (1979). The research team concept: An approach to graduate training. Communication Education, 28, 322-327).
b. Exchanges and sabbaticals (within the college or university or between such institutions regionally, nationally, or internationally; this might also involve placement in government, industry, etc. or joint appointments or new committee assignments).
c. Development of new knowledge or skills (attending research colloquia; participating in workshops or shortcourses; auditing courses in field or related fields).
d. Work on special projects (teaming with a colleague from outside the department to write a grant proposal or article; special assigments in administrative posts).
e. Participation in local, regional, or national conferences (sponsor a session on teaching techniques; talk with colleagues, book representatives, and equipment dealers; prepare presentations on consulting or other service activities).

Thank you for your time. I look forward to Ed's reaction and to your questions and comments.